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Review of Buffalo Bill on the Silver Screen: The Films of William F. Cody by Sandra K. Sagala

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Buffalo Bill on the Silver Screen: The Films of William F. Cody, by Sandra K. Sagala. William F. Cody Series on the History and Culture of the American West 1. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013. xvi, 218 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95 hardcover.

Reviewer J. T. Murphy is professor of history at Indiana University South Bend. His research and writing have focused on the military history of the U.S. West.

"I am certainly in the lime light now if I ever was," William F. Cody told his attorney in 1913, "and I will certainly keep it up because these moving pictures we are about to take will perpetuate me for future generations as well as for the present" (76). Ever conscious of his persona as Buffalo Bill, Cody never hesitated to tell his story or place himself within the heroic narrative of the American West. He was Iowa-born—a son of the frontier whose life as hunter, scout, and Indian fighter evoked an appealing mystique for eastern audiences. He became the subject of dime novels, appeared in theater productions, published an autobiography in 1879 when only 33, and, after 1883, became best known touring with his Wild West Show. But by the start of the next century, increased competition and financial losses pushed Cody toward the new medium of motion pictures.

Beginning in 1894, he welcomed Thomas Edison's cameras to showcase his troupe; then in 1910, Pliny P. Craft of the Patrick A. Powers Motion Picture Company helped Cody and his partner Gordon W. "Pawnee Bill" Lillie establish a film company of their own. Craft intended to capitalize on Cody's fame, and the old scout appreciated the continued attention. He appeared as himself in the opening and final scenes of John O'Brien's *The Life of Buffalo Bill* (1912); as he dreamt about past exploits, an actor portrayed the younger Buffalo Bill. An advertisement in *Motion Picture World* called the film "a truthful record of the life of the only surviving hero of the Indian Wars" (49).

When a federal court forced Cody to pay his debts by auctioning off what remained of his Wild West Show, he found backers for a film project titled *The Indian Wars* (1913), a retelling of the Wounded Knee massacre. Insisting on authenticity and truth telling, he garnered support from the army and the Lakota, hired novelist and Indian War veteran Charles King to write the screenplay, and set up his cameras on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Unfortunately, the film fared poorly. Audiences liked its realism but increasingly questioned the sameness of western themes, while government officials worried that its message was too real and at odds with their narrative of a benign Indian policy. Its failure forced Cody back on the circuit, but his popularity remained intact. After his death in 1917, filmmakers fought over rights

to his identity so they could continue telling Buffalo Bill stories. It seemed that no one grew tired of him.

Today, anyone interested in revisiting Cody's life has access to new editions of his books, and the Buffalo Bill Center of the West has made his papers and films available through its digital archive. With *Buffalo Bill on the Silver Screen*, the first volume in the William F. Cody Series on the History and Culture of the American West, independent researcher and historian Sandra K. Sagala contributes to our understanding of this iconic American by clarifying the final stage of his lengthy career. She includes a list of movies and television shows that feature Buffalo Bill, but the focus of her narrative is the early films. By explaining Cody's interest in the burgeoning industry, she reinforces his image as a self-promoting showman as well as a storyteller forever trying to inform and please the public.

Mapping the Nation: History and Cartography in Nineteenth-Century America, by Susan Schulten. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. xii, 246 pp. Maps, illustrations, notes, index. \$30.00 paperback.

Reviewer David Bernstein is visiting assistant professor of history at Denison University. His Ph.D. dissertation (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2011) was "How the West Was Drawn: Maps, Indians, and the Construction of the Trans-Mississippi West."

History, so dependent on chronology and change over time, has more recently begun to turn its attention to geography. Propelled in part by new digital visualization tools, this "spatial turn" has become the most coherent unifying theme of historical investigation since the cultural turn of the 1980s. Yet, as Susan Schulten argues in *Mapping the Nation*, long before GIS and Google maps seemingly revolutionized the questions historians could ask, people understood that *how* knowledge was organized and displayed shaped the *substance* of that knowledge. In words that could easily be applied to a twenty-first-century digital spatial history project, a reviewer of Francis Amasa Walker's *Statistical Atlas of the United States* (1875) articulated this understanding: without maps "many interesting questions would scarcely be solved, and many others would never have been raised at all" (178). That realization, according to Schulten, prompted nineteenth-century educators, scientists, social scientists, and federal administrators to use thematic mapping as a potent discursive tool. In so doing, they ushered in the graphic and map-saturated world we live in today.

In the first of two sections, Schulten explores how maps shaped national identity in the nineteenth century. That process was exemplified